Rare
BV
4285
S43
1791

DISCOURSE,
delivered in St. John's Church,
in Portsmouth, Newhampshire :
at the conferring the order of priesthood on
the Rev. Robert Fowle, A.M. of Holderness.
On the festival of St. Peter,

1791,

By the Right Rev. Samuel Seabury,
D.D. Bishop of Connecticut

CORNELL
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924104035963

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN

ST. *JOHN's* CHURCH,

IN

PORTSMOUTH, *NEWHAMPSHIRE*,

At the conferring the Order of PRIESTHOOD on

The REV. ROBERT FOWLE, A. M.

of *HOLDERNESS*.

On the FESTIVAL of ST. *PETER*, 1791.

By the Right Rev. SAMUEL SEABURY, D. D.
BISHOP of CONNECTICUT.

Am I therefore become your enemy, becauſe I tell you the truth?—GAL. iv, 16.

——the devil——is a liar, and the father of it.—St. JOHN, viii. 44.

——the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.—1. TIM. iii. 15.

PRINTED AT *BOSTON*,
BY ISAIAH THOMAS AND EBENEZER T. ANDREWS,
FAUST's STATUE, No. 45, NEWBURY STREET.
For GEORGE JERRY OSBORNE, jun. Printer, in *Portſmouth*.

MDCCXCI.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE misrepreſentation of a paſſage in the following Sermon, and the publick abuſe of the author, are the reaſons of its publication. As far as it goes, it contains his deliberate ſentiments on the ſubject, which he has no diſpoſition to retract. He has expreſſed them freely, *becauſe he thought it his duty; and becauſe in a* free *country, he ſuppoſed he had a right to do ſo. And he ſtill hopes he has as undoubted a privilege to explain and eſtabliſh the Epiſcopacy of the Church, as others claim to revile and deſtroy it. Should any one be diſpoſed to nibble at particular ſentiments and expreſſions, he is heartily welcome: The principles, he flatters himſelf, will abide the trial of reaſon and ſcripture. Nonſenſe, he knows, will have its paroxyſms, and that they will ſometimes be violently abuſive, eſpecially when the ſecrecy of a newspaper can effectually conceal an author in venting his ignorance and malice. The bleſſed Redeemer was reviled as a drunkard—the holy Baptiſt as a demoniack—St. Paul as a babbler—They were defamed—made as the filth of the world—the off-ſcouring of all things—and by whom? In ſuch company it is the author's higheſt honour to be found, ſuffering reproach as they did in the cauſe of truth.*

A

DISCOURSE, &c.

ST. MATT. XXVIII. 18, 19, 20.

JESUS CAME, AND SPAKE UNTO THEM, SAYING, ALL POWER IS GIVEN UNTO ME IN HEAVEN AND IN EARTH. GO YE, THEREFORE, AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST: TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU: AND, LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAY, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD. *AMEN.*

HAVING been engaged in the ſolemn ſervice of conferring the order of Prieſthood, and thereby ſending another labourer into GOD'S harveſt, to gather men into his church, and prepare them for future happineſs in his eternal kingdom, I think it my duty to call your attention to the commiſſion which our SAVIOUR gave to his Apoſtles juſt before his aſcenſion; becauſe that commiſſion, being the foundation of all authority which ever did, or can ſubſiſt in his Church, it is a matter of importance to us rightly to underſtand it, and conform our practice to it.

IN

In a country where religious opinions and profeſſions are ſo various, and in an aſſembly ſo large as this to which I now addreſs myſelf, it cannot be ſuppoſed that a diſcourſe on this ſubject can be equally acceptable to every one—ſome will condemn what others may approve. The boaſt of the preſent age, and particularly of this country, is liberality of ſentiment, and candour to thoſe who differ from us. Permit me then to avail myſelf of theſe diſpoſitions; and to hope, that while I endeavour, in truth and ſincerity, to explain the commiſſion which Christ gave his Apoſtles, as I underſtand it, I ſhall eſcape the cenſure of thoſe who differ from me in opinion, ſeeing I take no greater privilege in diſſenting from them than they do from me.

Humbly truſting in the grace of God's holy Spirit to preſerve me from all error in doctrine, and intemperance in expreſſion, I now apply myſelf to the buſineſs before me.

All power, ſaid our Redeemer, *is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt: Teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you: And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

Here a power is claimed by Christ, an authority is delegated to his apoſtles, a duty is enjoined on them, and a promiſe of ſupport is annexed

to

to it. The power claimed by CHRIST is unlimited—*all power is given to me in heaven and in earth.* As CHRIST is the ſon of GOD, this plenitude of power is inherent in him by his divine nature, and was ſo from eternity. As he is the ſon of man, and the mediator of the new covenant between GOD and man, this power was conferred on him by the ALMIGHTY FATHER.

The power, therefore, which CHRIST poſſeſſes in heaven, comprehends the power of ſending the Holy Ghoſt, of commanding the ſervice of the holy Angels, and all the hoſt of heaven, and of giving heaven itſelf to all who believe in him and obey him. His power on earth includes authority to gather his Church out of the nations, to rule and govern it by his will, to protect it by his might, to ſanctify it by his Spirit. This privilege CHRIST obtained by his reſurrection and aſcenſion.

The great end of CHRIST's coming into the world was to make atonement for ſin, and, through that atonement, to put man under a new covenant, even the covenant of grace and mercy, becauſe he was become incapable of fulfiling the original covenant of perfect obedience, by reaſon of the apoſtacy of human nature from GOD. CHRIST, therefore, inſtituted his Church to be a holy ſociety, conſiſting, in every age, of all thoſe who, through faith in him, and dependence on his atonement, ſhould renounce the apoſtacy of human nature, and ſhould live in

obedience

obedience to the laws and conditions of the new covenant of grace and mercy, which accepted of repentance inſtead of innocence, of earneſt endeavours after holineſs inſtead of that which is perfect, and of unfeigned obedience inſtead of that which is unſinning.

THOUGH CHRIST'S Church is not *of this world*, but is taken out of the world, and ſeparated from it, and therefore, is not to be governed by worldly policy, but by the laws of CHRIST; its members not to live by worldly maxims and principles, but by the rules and directions of the Goſpel; not by the ſpirit of the world, but by the ſpirit of GOD; yet as it is made up of members, collected out of the nations of the world, and brought into it by converſion from the ſervice of ſin to the ſervice of GOD, it muſt, at leaſt, for a time and in part, viz. while this life continues, be in the world.

THE inſtituted means of converſion was the *preaching* of the Apoſtles, and of thoſe who were commiſſioned by them—*Go ye and teach all nations*, that is, preach the Goſpel to all nations: Or, as St. Mark expreſſes it, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Goſpel to every creature*—to all who will hear you.

THE appointed mode, or inſtrument of admiſſion into the Church upon their converſion, was *Baptiſm*—*Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt.*

THE

THE rule of life to thoſe who were converted to the faith, and baptized into the Church, was the *Commandments of* CHRIST—*teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you.*

THE end of their faith and obedience, as we learn from St. Mark, was *eternal life—He that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved.*

THE ſupport the Apoſtles and their ſucceſſors were to receive in the execution of their commiſſion, was the *preſence of* CHRIST—*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

HOLY Scripture informs us that CHRIST purchaſed this Church by his death; that it is made ſubject to his authority by him who hath put all things under his feet; that it is animated and ſanctified by his ſpirit. On all theſe accounts, then, it muſt be his Church, and his only; and no man can have a right to interfere in its government or diſcipline, but by commiſſion from him; becauſe he is its head and king, its proprietor and ſupreme governor.

THAT he did give a commiſſion, or delegated a power to his Apoſtles to govern his Church under him, when he ſaid to them, *All power is given to me in Heaven and in earth,* &c. has been already obſerved, and further appears from St. John, *As my Father hath ſent me, even ſo ſend I you.* Let us then ſee what this commiſſion empowered and required them

to do, and then we ſhall be able to form a judgment of its extent and limitation—whether it was given to the Apoſtles in ſuch a manner as to exclude all others, except thoſe to whom they communicated it according to the will of CHRIST; or whether it be left common to all men, ſo that every one who chooſes may validly interfere in its government and offices?

BY their commiſſion, the Apoſtles were empowered and commanded to preach the Goſpel to all nations. To them our SAVIOUR's words are particularly directed; and from comparing together the accounts which St. Matthew and St. Mark have given us of this tranſaction, it appears that none were preſent but the eleven Apoſtles: to them, therefore, the commiſſion muſt be reſtrained. By a former commiſſion, they had been ſent to preach to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael, but were forbidden to go into other nations. Here their commiſſion was enlarged, and made to extend to all the nations of the world.

THAT GOD originally intended, that the bleſſings of redemption through MESSIAH ſhould extend to all nations, appears from the promiſe made to Abraham, that in his ſeed all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed. It was, therefore, neceſſary that the knowledge of redemption through him ſhould be preached to all nations, that they might believe in him, and in his Church obtain ſalvation through

his

his mediation: but how ſhould they *believe* in him of whom they have not *heard? Without faith*, ſaid an Apoſtle, *it is impoſſible to pleaſe* GOD. He ſaith, too, that *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of* GOD. His argument proceeds in this manner—*Whoſoever ſhall call upon the name of the* LORD *ſhall be ſaved.* They cannot *call* upon him in whom they have not *believed:* They cannot *believe* in him of whom they have not *heard:* They cannot *hear* without a *preacher:* They cannot *preach* except they be *ſent.* So that there can be no faith in GOD, but what is founded on ſome declaration which GOD hath made. But how ſhall we know what GOD hath declared except ſome one inform us? And who can inform us except they whom GOD hath commiſſioned to do ſo? He whom GOD hath ſent, can act in the name of GOD, and make known to us the will of GOD in thoſe particulars for which GOD hath ſent him. But ſhould one come without being ſent of GOD, though what he ſhould ſay might be reaſonable and true, our belief of it would not be faith in GOD, becauſe not founded on his authority. The neceſſity, therefore, of a commiſſion from GOD to preach his word, and make known his will, that we may believe in him and obey him, is evidently apparent.

ANOTHER power, which the Apoſtles received by their commiſſion, was that of admitting, perſons into CHRIST'S Church by baptiſm. The Church being CHRIST'S, he only can have power to appoint its

its government and officers: he only can preſcribe the mode of receiving members into it, becauſe he only is its king and head. No man, therefore, can have authority to receive perſons into CHRIST'S *family*—his *kingdom*, and make them members of his *body*—(for by all theſe titles is his Church diſtinguiſhed)—but by commiſſion from him, and in the way which he hath commanded. Suppoſe a man takes upon himſelf to make members of CHRIST'S Church, by ſome other mode than Baptiſm; Do they, in conſequence, become members of it? Or ſuppoſe he baptizes with water, in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST; Is the Baptiſm he adminiſters, CHRIST'S Baptiſm, when he has no authority from CHRIST to adminiſter it? Baptiſm is a covenant between GOD, and the party baptized. It includes engagements on both ſides. The party baptized acts for himſelf, or his ſureties, who are his repreſentatives, act for him. GOD'S miniſter is his repreſentative, and acts in his name, by virtue of the authority he has received from JESUS CHRIST, the mediator of the Covenant. The valid adminiſtration of Baptiſm, therefore, depends on a valid commiſſion from CHRIST.

THE other power, which the Apoſtles received by their commiſſion was, to inſtruct thoſe who had been baptized, and thereby admitted into the Church of CHRIST, in the directions and commands which he had given for the regulation of their conduct,

duct, that they might live ſuitably to the ſolemn engagements into which they had entered. They were to *teach them all things whatſoever* CHRIST *had commanded.*

THE exerciſe of this power conſiſted in their declaring and explaining the principles and doctrines of Chriſtianity; in their inculcating and enforcing the practice of virtue and holineſs; and in their adminiſtering, according to CHRIST's will, the ſacraments and diſcipline of his Church.

TO convey theſe powers, in the whole, or in part, is the deſign of Ordination; which is no more than the communicating ſuch a portion of CHRIST's commiſſion, as that order of the Clergy requires, to which the perſon ordained is appointed.

THAT our LORD intended the Apoſtolic office ſhould continue to the end of the world, is plain from the text, *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.* He knew the Apoſtles were not to live to the end of the world, and had warned them to expect, not only perſecution, on account of their preaching the Goſpel, but death alſo. CHRIST's promiſe, therefore, to be with his Apoſtles to the end of the world, was not only perſonally to them, but included their ſucceſſors alſo—all who ſhould hold their commiſſion to the end of the world: And indeed, may be ſaid to have been made rather to their commiſſion, than to their perſons; for it was only in the diſcharge of the duties of their commiſſion,

commiſſion, that they were the objects of the promiſe.

If, then, the Apoſtolical commiſſion ceaſed with the lives of the firſt Apoſtles, as ſome have taught, the promiſe of CHRIST, *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*, has failed; for the Apoſtles have been long dead, and the end of the world is not yet come: Then, too, there is no authority from CHRIST ſubſiſting in the Church; and of conſequence, CHRIST has no Church: The gates of Hell have prevailed againſt it, and it is extinct. For a Church, in which CHRIST has no authority, cannot be his Church: It may be the Pope's Church, or Luther's Church, or Calvin's Church, or Weſley's Church—his Church, whoever he was, who inſtituted its government and miniſtry: But CHRIST'S Church it cannot be, unleſs it be founded on his authority, and governed by his commiſſion. If, now, it be abſurd to ſay that CHRIST has no Church in the world, it is abſurd to ſay, that the Apoſtolical commiſſion ceaſed with the lives of the firſt Apoſtles; for if that commiſſion ceaſed, the Church founded under it ceaſed of courſe.

TAKING it then for an eſtabliſhed point, that the Apoſtolical commiſſion was to continue to the end of the world, it will follow that the government of the Church is, at leaſt ought to be, the ſame now, it was in the time of the Apoſtles, after they had ſettled it according to the will of CHRIST, and by virtue of his

his commiſſion : No human authority can have power to alter it ; and in whatever degree it has been any where altered, in the ſame degree it ceaſes to be the Church of CHRIST, and becomes a Church of human invention. For, the Apoſtles being divinely inſpired, and acting under the immediate direction of the HOLY GHOST, in all things neceſſary to the eſtabliſhment of the Church according to the will of CHRIST, none of their ſucceſſors could have authority to change the government they had eſtabliſhed, unleſs they could plead the authority of CHRIST for the change, with as much certainty as the firſt Apoſtles could for the original eſtabliſhment, and could give the ſame proof of divine inſpiration as thoſe Apoſtles had given. The power, therefore, of their ſucceſſors could go no further than to the adminiſtration of the government the Apoſtles had inſtituted :—The doctrines, ſacraments, government, and diſcipline of the Church were the *depoſitum*, the ſacred truſt committed to them, which they were to guard and adminiſter, not to corrupt, or change.

NOTWITHSTANDING the different opinions which have been entertained, and the many altercations which have in conſequence enſued, it ſtill remains a poſition capable of ſolid proof, that the government and offices of the Church were, in the time of the firſt Apoſtles, adminiſtered by three orders of Clergy in ſubordinate degrees. The Apoſtles, by CHRIST'S appointment, held the higheſt ſtation, and, under him,

him, were the ſource of all eccleſiaſtical power. Subordinate to them were the Preſbyters, ſometimes called Biſhops: While the Deacons ſtood in the loweſt rank, and were properly the aſſiſtants of the higher Clergy in the adminiſtration of their office.

THAT theſe three orders were in the Church, in the time of many of the firſt Apoſtles, has never been denied by the moſt zealous oppoſers of Epiſcopal government that I can recollect. They indeed ſay, that the apoſtolic office was temporary, and ceaſed at the death of the original Apoſtles. But it has been proved, that this opinion has no foundation to ſtand upon; becauſe if it be admitted, it will follow that CHRIST's promiſe, *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*, has failed. But if it be impious to ſay ſo, it is nonſenſe to ſay that the apoſtolical office has ceaſed.

WITH regard to *Preſbyters* there is no diſpute, unleſs it be about the names by which they are denoted. That Preſbyter and Biſhop are in ſeveral inſtances uſed in the New Teſtament, to expreſs the ſame office or degree of Clergy, is readily granted. But this conceſſion, if our opponents chooſe to conſider it as one, hurts not our argument, nor helps theirs. Suppoſe both terms to denote one and the ſame office, you muſt, at the ſame time, ſuppoſe the office denoted by thoſe terms to have been in the Church, or it could not have been denoted by any

terms

terms at all. Now, if there were ſuch officers in the Church in the times of the Apoſtles, as were ſtiled Preſbyters or Biſhops, it is eaſy to prove that they were ſubordinate, not only to the original Apoſtles, St. Peter, St. Paul, &c. but alſo to thoſe who were ordained Apoſtles by them, St. Timothy and St. Titus. Should any one doubt the fact, let him read St. Paul's Epiſtles to Timothy and to Titus, and then let him doubt if he can. So that whether we can give a decided reaſon for the appropriation of the name of Biſhop to the ſucceſſors of the Apoſtles, or point out the preciſe time when it happened, or not, our argument is unimpaired, while it can be proved, that thoſe Preſbyters or Biſhops were but ſecondary officers in the Church, and did not fill the higheſt ſeats.

With regard to the Deacons, the enemies of Epiſcopacy have reduced that order down to be of no degree of Clergy at all. They have ſome perſons, it is true, whom they ſtile Deacons, who are choſen by a plurality of lay voices, and enter on their office without even the pretence of an ordination. Whereas in the apoſtolical times, their title to be conſidered as an order of the Clergy is inconteſtible. They were ordained to their office by the laying on of the hands of the Apoſtles: And beſides their miniſtration at the holy communion and love feaſts, and their ſuperintending the charitable funds of the Church, they preached and baptized—witneſs St. Stephen and St. Philip.

ANOTHER proof of the Deacons being an order of Clergy may be taken from St. Paul's firſt Epiſtle to Timothy, where they are mentioned in ſuch terms, and ſuch directions are given concerning them, as can comport with no order of laymen.

IF then it was neceſſary the Deacons ſhould have thoſe powers in the time of the Apoſtles, why is it not neceſſary they ſhould have the ſame powers now? And if ordination, by the hands of the Apoſtles, was then neceſſary to confer thoſe powers, why is not ordination, by the hands of thoſe who ſucceed to the Apoſtles in conveying CHRIST'S commiſſion, now neceſſary to communicate the ſame powers?

IT has, I truſt, been proved, that there were, in the time of the Apoſtles, three orders of Clergy in the Church, by their inſtitution under the immediate inſpiration and direction of the Holy Ghoſt. That they, who have departed from the Epiſcopal government of the Church, have but one order, needs no proof—That there *ought* to be but one order is the ground of their ſyſtem. However, therefore, it may be with the Epiſcopal Church, they who reject Epiſcopacy (to ſay nothing of the invalidity of Preſbyterian ordination) have not that Church government, which the firſt Apoſtles ſettled and left in the Church.

THUS it appears to have been the intention of CHRIST, when he commiſſioned his Apoſtles to preach the Goſpel to all nations, that their commiſſion

miſſion ſhould continue to the end of the world. It appears alſo, that the Apoſtles, by virtue of that commiſſion, and under the inſpiration and direction of the Holy Ghoſt, did leave in the Church three orders of Clergy, then ſtiled Apoſtles, Preſbyters, or Biſhops, and Deacons; now called Biſhops, Preſbyters or Prieſts, and Deacons. Our duty, therefore, requires that we abide by that Church government which they inſtituted according to the will of CHRIST; becauſe no power on earth has authority to change it; becauſe too, if we do change it, and ſubſtitute another government in its ſtead, we have no warranted claim to the privileges and bleſſings which CHRIST has annexed to it.

THE duties, which belong to the office of Preſbyters in the Church of CHRIST, have been particularly ſpecified, and the obligations they are under to fidelity and diligence in the diſcharge of thoſe duties, have been ſtrongly enforced in the ſolemn ſervice which has been before you. It is to be hoped, that all who enter into this holy order, will ever remember the awful engagements they are under, to execute their office in the fear of GOD, to his glory, and the edification of his Church; knowing that they muſt give account to GOD of their conduct, both as Clergymen and Chriſtians. For their encouragement let them remember, that the *Preſbyters who rule well* that part of the Church which is committed to their charge, and *labour* in

the

the preaching of *the word and doctrine, are worthy of double honour*, and ſhall receive from GOD a crown of glory, in the day when he ſhall judge the world by JESUS CHRIST.

BUT, however honoured by their commiſſion, the Miniſters of CHRIST have *their treaſure in earthen veſſels*, and are ſubject to the infirmities, paſſions, and temptations of other men. It is therefore our duty to pray for them, that every one of them in his vocation and miniſtry, may truly and acceptably ſerve GOD through JESUS CHRIST. It is alſo our duty to treat them with candour and reſpect, if not on their own account, yet on his, whoſe Miniſters they are—to cover their imperfections and miſconduct with the veil of charity, eſpecially when no good is likely to accrue to the Church of GOD by expoſing them—to miniſter cheerfully to their neceſſities—to ſupport them in their duty by our influence, and eſpecially by our punctual and devout attendance on all the ſacred offices of our holy religion.

PERMIT me now to cloſe this diſcourſe by an application of the latter part of the text, taken principally from the writings of a divine of great piety and conſiderable eſtimation*—*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*—"I am and will be with you and your ſucceſſors, lawfully called by my power

* Burkitt, whoſe obſervations on the text, the author begs leave to recommend to all pious people.

power and authority, by the bleſſing and aſſiſtance of my Spirit: I will be with you to uphold 'and perpetuate' mine own ordinance; to protect, encourage, and reward you, and all your ſucceſſors in the faithful diſcharge of your truſt: And this not for a day, a year, or an age, but to the end and conſummation of all ages."

"THE miniſtry of the word, and adminiſtration of the ſacraments, are," therefore, "a ſtanding ordinance in the Chriſtian Church throughout all ages:" Conſequently there muſt be a continued ſucceſſion of ordinations to ſet men apart for ſo ſacred a ſervice.

FROM the text it alſo appears, "That all the faithful miniſters of CHRIST, in what part of the world ſoever GOD ſhall caſt their lot, and in what time ſoever they ſhall happen to live, may comfortably expect CHRIST's gracious preſence with their perſons, and his bleſſing on their endeavours," to extend the knowledge and means of ſalvation through him, among all nations; on their readineſs to receive all who ſhall be duly qualified, into his Church, by holy Baptiſm; and on their fidelity and diligence in inſtructing thoſe who are baptized, to obſerve all things whatſoever CHRIST hath commanded, and to live in all holineſs and righteouſneſs of life. To ſuch miniſters, duly called, and ſent according to CHRIST's appointment, the promiſe of the text belongs—To them CHRIST ſaith, *Lo,*

I am

I am with you ; I am alway with you ; and to the end of the world, I will be with you.

GLORY be to the great REDEEMER, for this his gracious promiſe :—May it inſpire all, to whom the ſacred myſteries of our holy religion are committed, with diligence and zeal in his ſervice, and with ſuch reſolution and courage, that they may think " No labour too great ; no ſervice too much ; no ſuffering too ſevere ; ſo that they may finiſh their courſe with joy, and fulfil the miniſtry in which they are engaged."

So be it, heavenly Father, for his ſake, to whom thou haſt given all power in heaven and in earth—That we obeying thy will in all things, may be partakers of thy heavenly treaſure. To Thee, O Father, to thy CHRIST, our SAVIOUR, to thy HOLY GHOST, the Sanctifier of the Faithful, be honour and glory, now and forever.—AMEN.

FINIS.